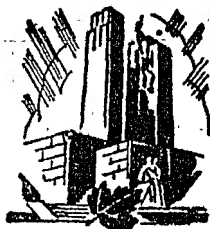




*For
Remembrance*



BY

Margaret Complin



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100

For Remembrance

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*"Now God is in the strife,
And I must seek Him there,
Where death outnumbered life,
And fury smites the air."*

SIEGFRIED SASSOON.

K 39819



With old wounds that ached, shell-shocked or lame,
To the Unknown Warrior's tomb they came,
The men who still must pay the price
In painful daily sacrifice.
Fill your glass today
To the living's fame.
Hush! Speak
Low,
Low,
—Low,
Softly tread,
He happy sleeps the unknown dead.

For Remembrance

We keep Remembrance Day once more
For those who died in the Great War.

No futile tears remembrance brings
But blood-red wreaths for offerings
To those who died, yet rise from sleep
When their sons come, a faith to keep.
Though tyrants crush the world again
They know they did not die in vain:
They feel the sons they never knew
Hate the same foe they hated too.
They stand beside the men who fight
Against those Vandals' brutal might;
They lie on battlefields again
And comfort men who die in pain;
They talk with sailor lads who go
To sink the U-Boats of that foe;
Or fly with keen-eyed boys who rise
To chase Hun planes from Egypt's skies.

We keep Remembrance Day once more
For those who died in the Great War.

Leading Seaman X

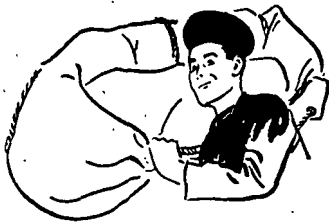
He garnered grain his hands had sown
In rolling prairie soil.
The heavy wheat stooked close in rows
Reward for all his toil.

He was content! Though now and then
He longed to hear once more
The white waves racing with the tides
On Nova Scotia's shore.

Sometimes in broken sleep he stood
The harbour watch again,
Or heard salt sea-winds hoarse with fog,
Music of grieving rain...

Then came the War... He joined the Fleet.
(They till his farm who may.)
Forsaken fields, furrows weed-sown,
Mean naught to him today.

He is content! He serves the King,
He stands watch once more,
And soundly sleeps to lullaby
Of rough seas' restless roar.



The Soldier



What thought his farm is warm with
spring?

He does not guide the plough.
Instead he drives an armoured tank
for Death, the Reaper, now.

On leave he longs for Canada
in London's inky dark,
and hears no melody of birds
in any flower-filled park.

War fades... He hears the meadow-larks
whistling across a plain
where buffalo-willows' pungent scent
drifts through the air again.

Small things a man remembers
with sudden stab of pain.



For An Observer

(A.C.R.)

I study your last photo for a trace
Of any change these fateful months have made:
Your eyes look up to mine still unafraid,
Beneath the Air Force cap how dear your face!
Yet war may score stern lines across your brow
When hour by hour you fight from dusk till dawn
To save the land you love from devils' spawn
Of Super-Fiends warring against us now.

I see young pilots challenging the skies,
From near-by airport comes the bombers' drone.
I seem to hear your voice, look in your eyes . . .
Then the dream fades, and I am here alone.

Your presence only could assuage this lack
My dear—And yet I could not wish you back.

A Tribute to Greece

Long since "the grandeur that was Rome"
has died of inward rot and fears.
"The glory that was Greece" still lives
watered by Grecian tears.

Are not these people brave beyond
belief while Vandals desecrate
their sacred soil, and crucify
its sons in devilry and hate?

Still stands the Niké and the Parthenon!
(Athene's temples raised by grateful Greece
after the Persian hordes had sued for peace.)
And the unconquered Dead at Marathon
know that the soul of martyred Greece lives on.

Listening In

We all
hear radio
plus ourselves and colour
with ^{our} imagination each
programme.

A Christmas Prayer

Grant us, O Lord, the strength to pray
for gifts that will not pass away:
courage to face the common task,
for hope and faith, dear Lord, we ask.
Comfort all those who lie awake
anxious for absent soldiers' sake.
Grant that a world of strife and pain
may turn to Bethlehem again
to hear the song the angels sing—
Remembering - Remembering.



Per Ardua Ad Astra

Beneath these breathless alien skies
a young Canadian airman lies.
His flight is finished... Hark! for him
the guns' staccato requiem.
To save a friend he paid the price
and gave his life, a sacrifice
where Nazi war-winged vultures soar,
and Britain's Fleet guards Egypt's shore.

Through labour to the stars he came
unfaltering. In War's grim game
he did not flinch. A fearless youth
who fell for friendship, freedom, truth.
What were his failing memories?
The Rideau seen through maple trees?
Alberta fields of ripened grain?
Or fragrant mayflowers in the rain?

(At dawn, with silence everywhere,
a father dreamed... wings beat the air;
low flew a circling silver plane;
he heard his son's farewell again.)

Grey pyramids assail the skies
from sifting sands where Icarus lies
with baffled wings... His flight is done...
Through labour to the stars he won.

Radio

This wonder knows no walls . . . I turn a dial
and listen to a lilting roundelay,
or poems underlaid with sorrow, while
an organ throbs and muted violins play.
I seek the short wave-- Shall I hear again
guns thunder grimly on the Dover shore?
Tanks lumbering along an English lane?
Or shuttling planes across a Scottish moor?

Unshackled Spirit! Scorning bounds of space,
within whose eager hands all sound is furled,
swifter than tempest, free as thought, you race
on speeding sandals round a listening world,
Man-doomed in sky and sea and land to strife
while wingéd words spread chaos in Man's life.

1942

The world
today is bound
like Prometheus with
the eagles of Zeus tearing his
vitals.



War Gardens

No longer in a sunny trench
the gladiolus grows,
the Queen of Flowers must abdicate.
to beets in long straight rows.
Here, crowding out the fragrant stocks,
are onions, cabbage, chives,
and where calendulas once flamed
the humble turnip thrives.
Potatoes grow in lumpy hills
where late a green lawn spread,
plebian spinach runs to seed
in the prize pansy bed.
Gaillardias give up their place
to sage and mint and thyme,
while runner beans usurp the wires
where sweet peas used to climb.



Training Planes at Night

A sudden roar of engines rouses
sleepers in the dreaming houses

as low the training airplanes fly.
Like jewels against the prairie sky

their green and red and white lights mark
a safe-planned course through prairie dark.

The student pilots, keen to learn,
think of the wings they hope to earn.

They swoop and turn and spiral down
above the swiftly blurring town:

till, soaring high in wide-winged flight,
they disappear into the night.

Bethlehem

War-worn soldiers patrol early and late
guarding the Holy Land with anxious eyes,
while airplanes trace hieroglyphs of hate
above blue hills where flat-roofed Bethlehem lies.
Day closes now to soft Judean night
and sheep lie 'huddled safe in strawy fold,
but angels are silent, no heavenly light
shines, no Magi bring frankincense or gold.

O Bethlehem, are you remembering
That far, first Christmas morn?
You have forgotten angels singing
"The Prince of Peace is born."



Their Torch Flares, Lit By Us

"If ye break faith with us, the Dead,
We shall not sleep," a Poet said.

France expiates in blood and tears
Yielding to traitors' frenzied fears,

Iron-heeled, rapacious German tread
Crushes the fields of poppies red;

And droning warplanes whirr and fly
Above the graves where our men lie.

Yet under crosses "row on row"
They sleep content, and sleeping know

The torch they flung is held on high
And we keep faith with those who die.

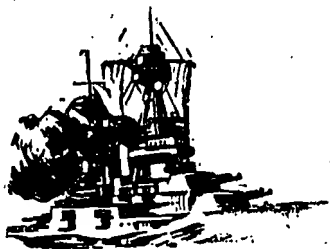
And ours to keep that faith today
With all who follow in their way.

Advice

Dreamer
cling to your vague
broken dreams: even a
shattered dream is better than no
dream at all.

Buy British

China, and lace, and soft kid gloves
in styles that every woman loves;
soldiers, and planes, and naval toys
made to delight Canadian boys;
warm blue-grey sweaters carefully knit—
we all know airmen they would fit—
fashioned by those who've conquered fear
of growling terror of the air.
Through "blood and tears and toil and sweat"
their factory wheels are turning yet:
Biscuits and jams and marmalade
still come to us, all British made.
The Navy convoys Britain's best
to war-free nations of the west,
guarding through bombs, U-Boats, and strife
the commerce that is Britain's life,
and when we buy what they have sent
we join them in a sacrament.



A Deserted Homestead

(SASKATCHEWAN)

No longer the familiar treading of feet—
In this forsaken farm nothing stirs
save gophers scampering for their holes.
Inch by inch encroaching Russian thistle
covers the trail from shack to stable
where his horses' nose-bags hang
rotting on the wall.
Petalled pall of prairie roses shrouds
the skeleton of a plough,
gold splash of mustard glints
in fallow fields,
but nothing remains of flowers he coaxed
to grow but pods heavy with seed.
I peer through windows curtained with
cobwebs and grey dust:
the sun-blistered door sags on rusted hinges
and creaks protestingly when opened . . .

I, who have shared his laughter and his toil,
loitering with him to watch
the wild geese winging,
or new-born foal
nuzzling the anxious mare,
am old, too old to join the Tanks with him.
I can but treasure brief lines from "Somewhere"
in England's war-marred countryside.

Is his the long loneliness of the prairie-born
for the bleak brown plains?
Will he tread the well-worn trail again,
or watch the wild geese winging?

Halifax

The old
Citadel stands
sentinel, guarding with
unseen guns an unbeleagured
town where

Sailors
wait on spray-wet
docks for convoys: their thoughts
with prairie homes far-off from seas
and war.



Armistice Day

I stand beneath a poppy-wreathed
Cenotaph.

Sunlight falls through bare boughs on
the Soldier.

I think on those whom we honour today:
those who gave themselves that peace might
not perish from the earth.

(Slowly the penumbra of a crooked Nazi
cross creeps over the brooding
Figure. A wreath of blood-red poppies
turns to a crown of thorns.)

Was theirs but a futile faith?
Are freedom, truth, justice—
all for which they died—
but idols, war-wrecked?

The Armistice Day service is drowned
in frenzied bark of anti-aircraft guns.
The words of the hymns, the music of the
band, are punctuated by cacophony of
sirens, and of bombs.
I cannot find God.

.... Yet in a beleagured Isle
men, in maze of grief and man-made
agonies, find Him through tears,
Or laughter like a prayer.

In Fields of Dream

"MOTHER!" I hear you call again
above the lashing autumn rain
beating upon the window-pane.

O hold me close! My heart is wrung
for you, so boyish and so young,
whose song of life is all-unsung.

(Too soon, too soon, the dream is done,
only the rain's diapason.)

Return to me in dreams each night
that I can keep a flame alight
and my soul's armour burnished bright.

If where dreams meet we two can range
you'll never grow far-off nor strange,
and dreaded hours will not seem long
with dreams of you to make me strong.

Thus night will fortify my heart
for days in which you have no part.



The Mother of an American Airman

As she knits socks of Air Force blue
the wool through her swift fingers flies,
and she dreams evanescent dreams
that lone reality decries.

*(Proudly she saw him go, and yet
Her eyes with sudden tears are wet.)*

He serves a country not his own
and with the R.C.A.F. flies.

His letters tell of safe return
from bombing raids through hostile skies.

*(With news of him by airmail flown
His hand has almost held her own.)*

She takes small treasures from her desk:
a Boy Scout's badge, a Pilot's wings,
the Christmas gifts he sent to her—
they comfort her, these little things.

*(Many once treasured gifts to Her
of gold and frankincense and myrrh.)*

His old dog feels her grief, and whines
crouched at her feet upon the floor...

Gazing courageously at death
her son flies over France once more.
*("God guide and guard my boy always
till victory brings peace" she prays.)*

A Prayer for the New Year

LORD, I grow old—Yet would not rest apart:
Make me Thine acolyte
whose duty
is to tend twin lamps of Truth
and Beauty
in a dim shrine within Man's troubled heart.

